



THIS MONTH MAY 2016



Burning up the Track

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The road flashed by seemingly just inches away from my shoulder as I rounded the sharp corner on my trusty Yamaha YZF-R6. I envisioned the road ahead of me, eager to get on the long, straight stretch and really open up and let the engine sing. I'd been down this road before and knew there wouldn't be any police. As I exited the corner, I hurriedly worked my way up through the gears. A quick glance at my

speedometer showed 130 mph.

I knew there was a slight right-hand bend about three-quarters of the way down the stretch, but I held the throttle all the way open. As I tried to spot the curve ahead, I entered the right-hand bend and felt a strange sensation. I was so focused on the curve that I didn't realize my bike was telling me my rear tire had lost traction and was sliding to the left.

For the next 20 seconds, my life hung in the balance. My rear tire suddenly regained traction,

violently snapping the rear of my motorcycle to its original position and throwing me over the handlebars. I've heard people say they saw their life flash before their eyes during a near-death experience, but that's not what happened to me. I saw the pavement and knew it would chew up my skin like a grinder. I thought, "Is this really happening to me?"

The next few moments were a blur. I seemed to slide forever until I hit the grass beside the road and

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began tumbling. I heard metal scraping as my bike skidded across the pavement — my handlebars taking the brunt of the damage. My bike then slid onto the grass and started tumbling. I heard the sound of plastic parts being ripped off my motorcycle. It was the sound of my bike dying.

The green grass and blue sky kept changing places as I tumbled. When I stopped, I was on my back, looking at a beautiful sky. Everything was quiet and I was afraid to move. Knowing that adrenaline can sometimes mask injuries, I laid still for a bit, waiting for the pain to start. You don't just fall off your motorcycle at 130 mph and not get seriously injured, right?

But the pain never came. I slowly raised my head and looked toward my feet. Everything looked intact. I saw something in my peripheral vision — an ambulance headed toward me. The emergency medical technicians arrived and began checking me out. After 15 minutes of "Does this hurt?" and not finding anything, I got up and walked away. That might seem impossible, except for the fact I was attending a rider improvement course at the Virginia International Raceway. If I had to crash

at high speed, this was the place to do it.

So how did I end up at the raceway? Seeing the growing number of motorcycle fatalities forced me to rethink not only how I was riding, but where I was riding. Knowing how dangerous public streets can be, I decided to get my bike on a real track. There I could ride as fast as I wanted in relative safety and not have to worry about the police.

I eventually found a company at the raceway that would allow me put my bike on the track. All I had to do was pay to take a rider enhancement course and the track was mine. Initially, I thought of this as an opportunity to showcase my "incredible" motorcycle-riding skills. Little did I know that the professionals teaching this course would train me to ride in ways I could only dream of — and do it in a safe, controlled environment.

I spent the day between classroom time and track practice. On the track, there was an instructor for every four riders. Instead of trying to see how fast I could go, my instructor's goal was to teach me how to safely get the most out of my bike.

After returning home, I began using the skills I learned from the course on the street. I quit riding

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Mission Statement:

The Army Safety Team provides the Army with safety and risk management expertise to preserve readiness through the prevention of accidental loss of our Soldiers, Civilians, Families and vital resources.



aggressively, treating every corner as a challenge and every straightaway as a drag strip. Once you've ridden on the track, you understand the dangers of public streets. On the track, I knew what was around the next corner. I knew I didn't have to worry about debris, cars, animals, people backing out of their driveways and other dangerous unknowns. On the street, you're rolling the dice every time you zip through a blind corner.

It was then that it hit me how overrating my skills could've set me up for an accident. I'd blown off motorcycle safety briefings because I thought I was a good rider. My attitude was, "This brief isn't for me. It's for those guys and gals who can't ride." Little did I realize those briefings were directed at my high-risk riding style. Riding with a professional instructor showed me the difference between the skills I thought I had and the ones I needed to avoid becoming a fatality statistic. That got through to me.

I did become a statistic, but not as a fatality. Although I wrecked my motorcycle at 130 mph, I got up and walked away from my crash. My personal protective equipment shows the battle scars, but my body doesn't. My bike was a total loss, but I wasn't.

Was it luck? I think not! I'm an example of how wearing the correct PPE and not racing on public streets can keep you out of the fatality statistics. For guys who want to go fast, I have a simple message — take it off the street and put it on the track! ■

Helping New Riders

SGT. 1ST CLASS FREDERICK MCMULLEN
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Since my training, I have a new challenge when riding. I have a group I regularly ride with and we try to grab new riders before they fall in with the wrong crowd. We teach them that when it comes to riding, it's about leaving your ego at the house and turning the testosterone level down. We point out that the streets are not our personal playground for going out and pushing the limits.

I show Army riders it's not enough to wear the correct personal protective equipment, attend safety briefs, sign counseling statements promising to ride safely and get their bikes inspected by their leaders. I tell them they must make a personal commitment to not become a statistic.

We share our experience with new riders to help them ride safer. We pick out a route for a ride that will not overwhelm or scare them. Before we begin, we perform a brief much like a military convoy brief. This is an important step — especially for new riders because they must know we're there to help.

We brief them on the route and the hand signals we'll use. We also brief them on

emergency procedures should there be an accident or a rider gets lost. We put new riders toward the back of the group and pair them with a strong rider who can evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. We plan rest stops to discuss any issues that need to be addressed. These stops are very important because they allow the strong rider to evaluate each of us, providing an honest critique. No one is exempt from constructive criticism.

Sometimes you can overwhelm a new rider with too much information, so only one or two new techniques are suggested for them to try. After the ride, we get together to talk about how things went, mimicking an after-action review and reinforcing lessons learned.

Our main goal is to keep these new riders riding with us. If that seems over the top, remember we are trying to keep them from finding a thrill-seeking group. These groups don't care about the safety of new riders; all they want to do is show these newbies how to "really" ride. They don't care who is weak and might need some help; they just want to get an adrenaline rush. When new riders find themselves in such groups, peer pressure and lack of experience can lead to horrific endings. ■

ARE YOU The Thrill Seeker?

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Going Down with the Ship

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 JOSEPH G. NELSON
900th Maintenance Company (Component Repair Company)
Alabama Army National Guard
Brundidge, Alabama

I have owned at least six boats since I was 15. None of these were big boats, mind you; just 19 feet or less. Being that I'm very safety conscious, I've taken my share of boating courses and always carry more than the minimum requirement of protective gear whenever I go out on the water. I also always leave a float plan. It's nothing fancy — just a piece of notebook paper with the names of my passengers, where I intend to launch, where I am going, the type of vessel and my expected time of return. I have two VHF radios, one of which is a backup, and added an extra bilge pump on my boat as an additional safety precaution. I also have extra life preservers on board at all times. Unfortunately, as I learned firsthand, not all boat owners are as serious about safety.

As I said before, none of my boats have been very big. So when my buddy, Paul, invited me for a day of deep-sea fishing on his friend's big boat, I jumped at the opportunity. Paul's friend, David, is somewhat of a local legend on the Gulf Coast fishing circuit. He routinely wins fishing tournaments, and often gets his picture in the paper for his angling prowess.

We met at David's house before daylight on a Saturday morning and



piled into his truck towing a 26-foot Sea Pro. She was a beauty — long and sleek with a T-top, 40-gallon live well and 250-horsepower Yamaha outboard motor. We launched at Dauphin Island and headed out into the Gulf of Mexico before dawn. The water was a little rough, but the V hull on the Sea Pro

the boat and saw standing water. I opened the bilge hatch and it was full of water. David turned on the bilge pump, but the water did not get any lower. He decided to try to get the boat up on plane and drain the water through the drain holes in the back, but she would barely move. There was so much water in the boat that the Yamaha could barely push her, and the bow went almost straight into the air.

I started bailing the water with a bucket but made no headway. Where was this water coming from? I looked down into the bilge hatch and what I saw amazed me. A 1-inch PVC fitting had snapped off and water was gushing in through the broken pipe. I tried to stick my thumb in the hole and received a mild shock. The batteries were underwater, in the hold, and were actually shocking me whenever I stuck my hand into the water.

Things were getting pretty hairy, and Paul asked David where he kept the life jackets. When Paul pulled them from under the console, there were only two children's life jackets and one throwable flotation

FYI

In an effort to reduce loss of life, injuries and property damage on America's waterways, the U.S. Coast Guard offers a wealth of boating safety information of its website at <http://www.uscgboating.org/>.

cut through the 3-foot waves fairly easily, so the ride wasn't too bad.

By noon, we had our limit of snapper, as well as a few of grouper and amberjack. It was at our last stop at one of David's "honey holes" that things went south. We were preparing to head to another spot when Paul noticed his feet getting wet. We looked toward the rear of



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device. Not good! We saw an oil rig about a mile away, and slowly headed toward it. Meanwhile, David radioed his brother, Brian, who was fishing a couple of miles away, and told him about our predicament.

As Brian headed our way, I thought for sure we were going into the water. Finally, David took the handle from a bait net, wrapped a rag around it and crammed it into the broken PVC pipe. It seemed to hold, and between the bilge pump and our continuous bailing, we got

Did You Know?

May 21-27 has been designated as National Safe Boating Week. For more information, visit www.safeboatingcampaign.com/.

enough water out of the boat for the motor to be able to get us up on plane. We continued to the oil rig, and circled it until Brian arrived. He escorted us back to the dock, and we all made it home safely that day.

One of the things that surprised me the most about that day was the fact David did not have enough life jackets on board for all of us. Also, he had re-plumbed his live well the night before and didn't get a chance to wet check his work before we went out the next morning. Additionally, David was not in the habit of leaving a float plan with anyone and

did not leave one that day.

How could this guy, who had been fishing and boating in the Gulf of Mexico all his life, be so careless when it came to safety? How had his carelessness not resulted in disaster before our trip? Maybe he had some close calls in the past and I just hadn't heard about them. I'm not saying I'll never fish with David again, but I definitely will be more involved in the trip planning.

Some lessons that I learned that day include:

1. A bigger boat is not always a better boat.
2. Always ask the captain about the location of personal flotation devices, fire extinguishers, radio communication and anything else you can think of before the boat leaves the dock.
3. Always leave a float plan with someone. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate; but someone needs to know where you're going, who is going with you, what your capabilities are and what time you plan to return.

As for me, I'm content to captain my own little skiff. And, as always, I will do it with an overabundance of respect for the elements and carry the proper boating safety gear so I'm never in danger of going down with the ship. ■

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Announce Your Actions

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 EDWARD CAMPBELL
12th Aviation Battalion
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

Until I experienced my first instrument flight in real weather conditions as an aviator, I never fully understood the workload and focus required by the pilots; nor did I realize how quickly and easily things can get out of control. If I had known this as a crew chief, I would have probably stopped flying.

It was a cold and dark night in the California high desert when my air ambulance crew received a call for a patient transfer to Loma Linda Medical Center. I was a 750-hour NG crew chief, and the medic was the detachment first sergeant. On the controls was a fresh-out-of-school WO1; the pilot in command was a CW3 instructor pilot.

After we departed the hospital, our route of flight took us from the high desert down to the San Bernardino Valley and passed over Cajon Pass, an area known for its high wind, turbulence and fog, as well as a collection of high-tension lines. Shortly before reaching the pass, we encountered heavy fog and transitioned to instrument flight. We were unable to receive clearance from Los Angeles Center for our requested altitude and were instructed to climb to 9,000 feet.

As we climbed through a solid cloud layer, I relayed to the pilots that ice was building rapidly on the airframe. They immediately double-checked the anti-ice and de-ice systems to ensure they'd been turned on. I heard the pilot tell the PC the aircraft was nose low. I looked up at the gauges and saw us rocking between 5



degrees up and 10 degrees down while our airspeed indicator was intermittent between 0 to 110 KIAS.

There was no response from the PC, and the pilot repeated that the aircraft was nose low. Again, there was no answer, so the pilot declared he had the controls. The PC then said, "The hell you do."

I was glued to the instrument panel, trying to figure out what was happening. I noticed the master caution and caution advisory panel illuminate. The blade de-ice had failed, and this led to the controls becoming nearly unresponsive. We were in a slow descent and notified the air traffic control center of our situation. We were high enough at this point to clear the power lines in Cajon, but silently we all hoped we were on the downslope side just to be safe. The pilots regained full control of the aircraft around 3,000 feet above ground level and we finally punched out of the clouds at 700 feet, three miles from the hospital.

After shutdown, the crew had a

chat. The PC's attention had been fully focused on the situation and he did not have the confidence in the new pilot to handle the aircraft in our situation. He did acknowledge he should have announced his actions and responded to the pilot's declaration of nose low, but he was task saturated. The PC's rocking of the aircraft was an attempt to register airspeed on the indicator when it was reading zero. (This was caused by the intermittent operation of the Pitot heat that would allow ice formation to block airflow, then open back up when it melted.) The pilot, however, though it was the PC having difficulty handling the aircraft.

While waiting for the weather to improve, we discussed the flight and events, identifying what went well and what was problematic. However, we did in a friendly manner because we were still alive to do so. ■


HERE IT COMES



Overcorrecting often leads to rollovers, the deadliest of vehicle crashes.

How can you prevent it?

Don't panic! Take your foot off the gas, smoothly steer back onto the road and, if you must brake, apply even pressure to the pedal without stomping.

A black and white photograph of a woman driving a car, her mouth open in a shocked or panicked expression, with her hand on the steering wheel.

READY ...OR NOT?

Ready ... or Not is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their readiness for what lies ahead - both the known and unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we're not. Navigating life's challenges is all about decision-making.

So are **YOU** ready ... or not?

<https://safety.army.mil>





Don't Knock T-CLOCS

SGT. 1ST CLASS ROLLIE T. COLEMAN
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3rd Aviation Regiment
Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia

A company-sponsored motorcycle safety day and ride is always a welcome change to the daily grind. It was during one of these events that seven of my fellow riders and I learned a near-fatal lesson in proper motorcycle safety inspections.

While assisting the company motorcycle mentorship NCO, I had planned a 135-mile ride to lunch to take place on a Friday. We had already rescheduled twice due to weather, so when we finally got a good day to ride, we were eager to go. During preparations to leave the company area, we had a lot of things going on. As we conducted pre-ride T-CLOCS inspections on everyone's motorcycles (Tires and wheels, Controls, Lights, Oil and Chassis, Stands), I covered the planned route, risk assessment worksheet and expected road conditions. I then had everyone move to their left and inspect the bike next to them as a control measure and to get a second look at each motorcycle in the line.

Once the inspections were complete, we geared up and rolled out of the parking lot. About 25 miles down the road, I looked in my mirror and noticed the entire formation behind me was rapidly slowing down



and pulling into a farmhouse driveway. By the time I turned around and pulled in with the rest of the group, they were all dismounted and clustered around one of the riders. The rider's air intake mounting hardware had vibrated out and caused the entire air intake to fall off the bike.

During the next 20 minutes of scrounging for tools and putting the air intake back together, we all cracked a few jokes about this rider's bike falling apart. While we were giving him a hard

time, most of us unconsciously began walking around our own bikes to make sure they were still in good shape. The rider that had been in the number two position in the formation called me over to look at his bike.

When he leaned on his rear fender he thought it felt like was moving unnaturally. Upon further inspection, we realized the swingarm bolts had backed out of the frame. In fact, the left-hand bolt had backed out to the point that the only thing

FYI

T-CLOCS was developed by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation to assist riders in completing a comprehensive pre-ride motorcycle inspection. To print your own copy of the T-CLOCS inspection checklist, visit https://safety.army.mil/Portals/0/Documents/OFF-DUTY/PMV-2/PAMPHLETS/CHECKLISTS/Standard/Motorcycle_T-CLOCS_poster_web.pdf.

For additional information, visit <https://safety.army.mil/OFF-DUTY/PMV-2/PamphletsChecklists.aspx>.



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“While you might not be able to catch everything on an inspection, spending a little extra time and attention never hurts.”

holding it in was the fact it was snagged on a passing brake line clamped to the frame. We grabbed the tools to reinstall the bolts correctly and re-torque them. Once all the repairs were completed, we finished the ride and returned home.

During our debrief, we

discussed the issues that occurred on our ride. If we had not encountered the air intake issue early on, we probably wouldn't have found the major issue, the swingarm bolts, before it resulted in a disastrous situation. If the swingarm bolts had fallen out while the rider

was going down the road, the resulting catastrophic failure would have taken down most, if not all, of the formation.

While we thought we took the right amount of time on our inspections, we don't know if the deficiency was overlooked or occurred once we were on the road. While you might not be able to catch everything on an inspection, spending a little extra time and attention never hurts. ■

RIDE FOR YOUR LIFE

The Motorcycle Mentorship Program establishes voluntary installation-level motorcycle associations where less experienced riders and seasoned riders can create a supportive environment of responsible motorcycle riding and enjoyment. This can create positive conduct and behavior and serve as a force multiplier that supports a commander's motorcycle accident prevention program.

MMP

MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Check out the U.S Army Combat Readiness Center MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.

<https://safety.army.mil/mmp/>



Better Safe than Sorry

KYLE HODGES
Fort Knox Garrison Public Affairs
Fort Knox, Kentucky

So you got a new firearm for Christmas, or maybe you recently gave your child his or her first BB gun. Whether you're a first-time gun owner or seasoned firearms enthusiast, you're in a powerful position of responsibility. As such, you should always be ready to review basic/common-sense firearm information and discuss how you can continue to enjoy your firearm responsibly.

If you're the type of person who only reads the first few paragraphs of an article — I understand completely — I'll say this upfront: practice continuously; be highly knowledgeable of the weapons systems you're using; safety is your new best friend; and do your own research from legitimate sources. Don't rely on what you read on some Internet forum. There's a lot of misinformation out there and, as responsible firearms owners, it's up to us to dispel myths and rumors and act as role models for all future shooters.

The basics

According to the Fort Knox Directorate of Emergency Services, two accidental discharges have occurred on the installation in the last five years. One of those was committed by a Soldier with formal weapons training. So, even if you are an experienced gun owner, the following information applies to you as well.

Let's start by reviewing the 10 Rules of Safe Gun Handling according to the National



“Don't rely on what you read on some Internet forum.”

Shooting Sports Foundation. These rules always must be followed to the letter regardless the owner's experience level. Detailed information on each of these rules can be found at www.nssf.org/safety/basics.

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
2. Firearms should be unloaded when not actually in use.
3. Don't rely on your gun's "safety."
4. Be sure of your target and what's beyond it.
5. Use correct ammunition.
6. If your gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care!
7. Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting.
8. Be sure the barrel is clear of

obstructions before shooting.

9. Don't alter or modify your gun, and have guns serviced regularly.

10. Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearm you are using.

Proper storage

In addition to those 10 rules, I've added another: Ensure your weapons are always stored properly. I became a father about a year ago. With the birth of my son came the responsibility to ensure my firearms were out of his grasp. So, I bought a gun safe (or two). In addition to child safety, safes provide a way to organize your firearms and keep them out of the hands of thieves.

The type of safe you purchase will depend on your lifestyle and



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what you consider an acceptable balance of preparedness and risk. I have a large safe that contains the majority of my collection, as well as a small, fingerprint-activated safe under my nightstand which houses my home-defense pistol. The pistol is locked and loaded and available to me within seconds if needed; however, there is no way for my son to get his hands on it.

If you don't have children,

shoot both 5.56 NATO and .223 Remington cartridges; but a .223 Remington rifle may explode if you load it with a 5.56 cartridge.

Normally, the types of ammo your weapon can accept will be engraved on the firearm's barrel. If there is any doubt in your mind, check the owner's manual or call the firearm manufacturer for guidance. There are no stupid questions

confirm the gun is unloaded before beginning any cleaning operation. Thanks to his advice, I've never had an accidental discharge.

Protective equipment

We're only given one set of eyes, so it's a good idea to invest in some reliable vision protection. I can't count how many times I've been whacked in the glasses with a stray shell. When purchasing eye pro, make sure the lenses are rated to withstand an impact — your reading glasses probably aren't — and that they wrap around the face, covering the sides of your eyes. Eye pro can be clear or tinted, and some come with interchangeable lenses. I would also recommend an anti-fog coating for your glasses. Whatever eye pro you purchase, just make sure to wear it.

Good hearing protection is also a necessity. After all, just about every firearm has the ability to cause permanent hearing damage, even repetitive shots from a .22 rifle. There are basically only two types of hearing protection — earplugs and earmuffs. Before you make your selection, check the product's decibel (dB) rating, which should be located on the packaging or the manufacturer's website.

Why is the dB rating important? Let's say for the purpose of this article that a typical gunshot is about 150 dB. If your hearing protection is rated for 23 dB, it will reduce the sound of the gunshot to 127 dB. That's not good enough according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's permissible exposure limit of

FYI

Other popular safety devices for firearms include key-operated trigger locks, which allow you to carry the key on your keychain when you're away from home. Many law enforcement agencies offer them free of charge simply by asking.

you may believe you don't need lockable firearm storage. But consider this: What would you do if you had guests with children over for dinner or the weekend? How do you ensure your firearms stay out of their hands? Children at home or not, a firearm should always be secured so that only the proper owner/operator can unlock it.

Ammunition

Always make sure you are using the correct ammunition for your firearm. Some firearms can accept several different types of ammo. For instance, a .357 Magnum revolver can shoot .357 Magnum and .38 Special rounds; but a .38 Special revolver cannot shoot .357 Magnum ammunition. In the AR-15, a 5.56 NATO rifle can

when it comes to your safety.

Maintenance

An often overlooked safety measure is the proper cleaning and maintenance of your firearm. Besides helping ensure your gun will function properly, frequent cleaning can help preserve it and prevent dangerous situations such as overpressure and various mechanical failures. If done incorrectly, however, cleaning can actually damage a firearm, so it's important to read the manufacturer's directions.

Before cleaning — or even handling — your firearm, though, there's one universal rule: Check to ensure it's unloaded. My father always taught me to remove the magazine and double-check to



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90 dB. I typically use earplugs and earmuffs simultaneously, which reduces any sound down to a reasonable level.

Other responsibilities

If you recently bought or received a handgun, you might also be considering a concealed carry permit. I encourage gun owners to carry, but only after they are intimately familiar with their weapon, have shot several hundred rounds through it and have received formal training on how to use it in real-life situations. I'm a firm believer that "an armed society is a polite society," but you must be absolutely sure you are ready to handle that responsibility and are familiar with all applicable local laws before doing so.

If you're a gun owner and a parent, it's imperative your children understand the proper safety procedures required when dealing with the weapons in your home as well as in the homes of others. Just because you keep your weapons locked up doesn't mean others are as responsible. In addition to discussing the tips I've provided in this article, Project ChildSafe, an organization that promotes firearms safety, offers the following advice on its website, www.projectchildsafe.org, regarding what to tell your children:

- Don't go snooping, or allow other kids to go snooping, for guns in the house.
- If you find a gun in your house, or anywhere else, STOP! Do not



touch it or allow anyone else to touch it. Leave the area and be sure to immediately tell an adult.

- Even if a gun looks like a toy, don't touch it. Some real guns look like toy guns, so don't take a chance. Again, leave the area and immediately tell an adult.

Additionally, I would recommend parents have a discussion with their children regarding the reality of weapons versus what they see on TV and in video games. Children should understand that even if their gun is a toy, they should never point it at a living thing, unless they actually intend to destroy it. They should also always assume a gun is loaded.

One way to help teach children about firearms safety is to get them involved in shooting sports. Speaking from personal experience, shooting — especially distance shooting — requires discipline, concentration,

confidence, precise hand-eye coordination, and math and science skills. It's hard to argue that those aren't some useful skills and traits from which a lot of children would benefit. Range practice is also a great stress reliever. I like to call it recoil therapy. Shooting sports can be a great way to bond with your child.

Conclusion

While this information is a good starting point, I would encourage you to do more research on your own about safety and statistics. Make sure the classes you take are from reputable, certified weapons instructors. Read as much as you can on the subject and seek out hands-on training opportunities. Pardon my use of the old Army slogan, but it's the only way you can "be all you can be." ■



Don't Lose Your Head

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 DANIAL W. MOORE
D Company, 1/224th Service and Support (Air Assault)
Davison Army Airfield
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

We didn't brief a change in plans and because of it, I watched as my friend walked toward certain death from the main rotor blades.

It was June 2010 when my unit was activated and deployed to Germany. We were the first Lakota medevac National Guard unit ever deployed there. The Black Hawk unit we were covering for was on a rotation in the Middle East. Although we had been flying the airframe for several years, as a National Guard unit we had a constant influx of new people into the unit. This probably isn't much different than active-duty units, but at least they have more cohesion and constant sustained training.

With our mission being medevac, our unit commander decided our rotation would be three 24-hour shifts with two days off in between. The tempo was not that hard, so there was always ample opportunity to fly in the box for simple training missions and to stay proficient.

I had been pulling medevac rotation with my crew and was on day three of three. I think the biggest problem with this rotation was some members didn't have the discipline to maintain any type of real sleep schedule. Several younger crewmembers tended to stay up late playing Xbox and would sleep late in the morning; others would turn in early and be up earlier. You never really knew if the crew was fully rested or not and



had to take them at their word.

One evening following dinner, we decided to go for an hour-and-a-half training flight before sunset, after the air had cooled off a bit. We flew with two pilots, a medic and the crew chief. We hadn't been in country long, so flying in the box had not yet become monotonous. On this particular evening we decided to do a little collective training that would get the back seaters involved. As the pilot in command, I said during the preflight briefing that we would look for and conduct some pinnacle approaches and find some confined area landings that would require the back-seaters to have eyes out and give voice commands to the front-seaters to safely place the aircraft.

After we successfully landed the aircraft on about a half-dozen different locations that were really nothing more than small knolls and decent-sized landing zones, we headed back to the medevac shack. That's when I spotted a pinnacle on top of a 300-foot bluff. It was almost a saddle in that there

was rising terrain, then a flat spot, and then a rise again. It seemed like the perfect combination: a pinnacle in a confined area dotted with trees that would require exact placement of the aircraft.

I proceeded to do a slow, 360 degree recon at 500 feet above ground level, and then down to 300 feet for another look. I didn't see any obvious reason why we couldn't land there. The winds were also in favor of a good landing direction, and we were much lighter now that we were close to the end of our flight. The approach and landing, while challenging for the whole crew, was textbook and went very smoothly. After the aircraft was flat pitch and idle, we paused for a quick hot wash of the landing.

The view from the pinnacle was quite spectacular, with the sun beginning to set in the distance. The medic on board asked if they could exit the aircraft and take a look around. We weren't in a hurry to get back and I saw no real issue with them doing a quick recon of



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the hilltop even though it hadn't been briefed. I was on the left side and remained in the aircraft with the pilot.

For some reason I was expecting both the medic and crew chief to exit the aircraft from the right side. I suppose this made more sense in my mind as this was the downslope side of the saddle. In fact, I was focused on looking to the right to see thumbs up from them both as they exited the aircraft, but only saw the crew chief deplane. That was when I realized the medic had exited from the left side and didn't wait for my thumbs up. To my horror, he was proceeding to walk away from the aircraft to the 9 o'clock position which had significantly rising terrain.

By the time I realized what was happening, the medic was already at the edge of the tip path plane and continuing up the hill. A thousand things went through my mind at once as I desperately tried to figure out how to stop him from certain death. We were at flat pitch and idle, so there was no time to pull pitch, although that wasn't a realistic option anyway.

My next instinct was to put a right lateral input into the cyclic to raise the tip path plane, which I did. While this caused the possibility of a mast moment in the Lakota — a small price to pay, in my opinion — the bigger issue was the downsloping terrain and the possibility of dynamic rollover. In any event, the difference afforded was minimal at best.

At that point I just held my breath and watched, knowing I was about to take my friends head off with the main rotor blade. I wanted to yell to him. I wanted to honk the horn. I wanted to do a hundred things that were never going to happen. I can't even begin to describe the hopeless feeling I had. Fortunately, God, karma, Murphy and the stars all agreed it was not his time to go. He cleared the blades by what seemed like inches, and continued up the hill — completely oblivious to just how close he came to instant death.

I learned a valuable lesson that day. If it wasn't briefed in the beginning, don't do it. However, if it becomes necessary ("necessary" being the key word) to deviate from the initial plan, then another quick brief needs to happen beforehand. The whole crew needs to be on the same sheet of music. You need to ensure everyone has a clear understanding of your expectations and talk through the sequence of events to identify any possible hazards. Then mitigate those hazards. Always use the most conservative response. ■



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A Battle Worth Fighting

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 JASON P. WILLIAMS
1st Battalion, 337th Aviation Regiment
Fort Hood, Texas

Falls are some the most common and easily avoidable causes of injury in the workplace. So why do they continue to happen? The safety community is constantly trying to answer that question.

Have you ever argued with your children about the importance of wearing seat belts? My personal battle began shortly after my youngest son outgrew his booster seat. Part of the fight was my own doing because I used to allow him to take off his seat belt on long trips so he could lie down in the backseat. At some point, however, I realized the error of my ways and changed the rules for riding in the car. As most people with children can imagine, this started an ongoing conflict that would at times end with me red in the face and my son in tears. Nevertheless, I remained determined to correct the problem I had created.

Fast forward a few years and I'd been deployed about three weeks. I hadn't talked to my wife during the past few days. When I finally got in touch with her, I'll never forget the sound of her voice. I knew something was wrong when she said, "Hey, honey, let me just say we are all OK." Hearing her say that, though, didn't make the message any easier as she explained what happened.

My family was on the way from Fort Hood, Texas, to Austin for my son's soccer tournament. My wife was driving and my 10-



and 2-year-old sons were in the backseat. During their drive, they encountered a bad thunderstorm. A few minutes into the storm, they hit a flooded section of road and my wife lost control of the SUV, which slid onto the grass on the right shoulder. She was able to regain control, slow down and attempt to ease back onto the road. However, the right-rear tire hit the road edge and blew out, sending the SUV sliding sideways and overturning three or four times before it came to rest upside down in the grass.

My wife didn't realize she was hurt and checked on the boys, who appeared to be OK. She climbed out of her window and tried to open the back doors, but they were stuck. By now, people were coming over to assist. My oldest had undone his seat belt and was brushing glass out of his brother's hair. He couldn't get him out of his car seat and

wouldn't leave without him.

While all this was going on, my wife was in and out of consciousness. Her left arm was seriously injured and she was bleeding profusely from her head. She remembered asking to see our boys and a woman telling her they were doing fine. She'd been assuming the worst, but the fact was, the woman didn't want the kids to see their mother's condition.

My wife went on to explain that the kids had some minor injuries from the stroller and backpacks flying around inside the vehicle. My oldest son needed some dental work due to being struck in the face by something, and my youngest had a large lump on his head. Considering that everything else in the SUV was spread across the highway, I was just happy to hear they were all alive. Their seat belts saved their lives — of that, I am sure.

As I listened to the story, I



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couldn't help wondering if I had done something to contribute to this accident. I asked myself, "Were the wipers OK? How old were the tires? When was the last time I checked the tire pressure?" I'd looked over the car shortly before deploying, but was concerned I might have missed something.

For a long time I thought about how I'd have felt had any of them been killed. Those uneasy thoughts hung around in my mind, but I eventually accepted the fact that there

I also explained to him that his concern for his brother in an emergency is a quality that many don't possess, especially other children his age. After seeing the SUV's condition, my wife was amazed they survived and felt she'd been given a new lease on life.

It was humbling to come home from combat to hear the details of my family's near-death experience. It is a perfect example of how the most obvious hazards — such as what I faced in

Click It or Ticket

Every year around the Memorial Day weekend holiday period, law enforcement agencies nationwide ramp up their efforts to crack down on motorists who fail to wear their seat belts. This year's Click It or Ticket campaign runs from May 18-31. **Buckle up!**

was nothing I could do to change the past. Instead, I decided I would focus on how to do better in the future.

My wife and son had some difficulty dealing with the aftermath of the accident. Riding in a car during a bad storm is still a little hard for them, but they have gotten much better. Looking back on it, we view the entire incident as a learning experience for us all.

Obviously, we no longer have a seat belt issue. In fact, I've heard my son remind his friends to fasten their seat belts.

combat — are not always the ones that hurt or kill people. Since then, I've worked to make myself more aware of the potential hazards to my family. I've also tried to be better about explaining how and why I take certain safety precautions so my family will be even better prepared the next time I'm gone. When I deploy, I'm not just committed to protecting my comrades in combat; I'm just as committed to protecting my family at home. It's a battle you can't afford to lose. ■

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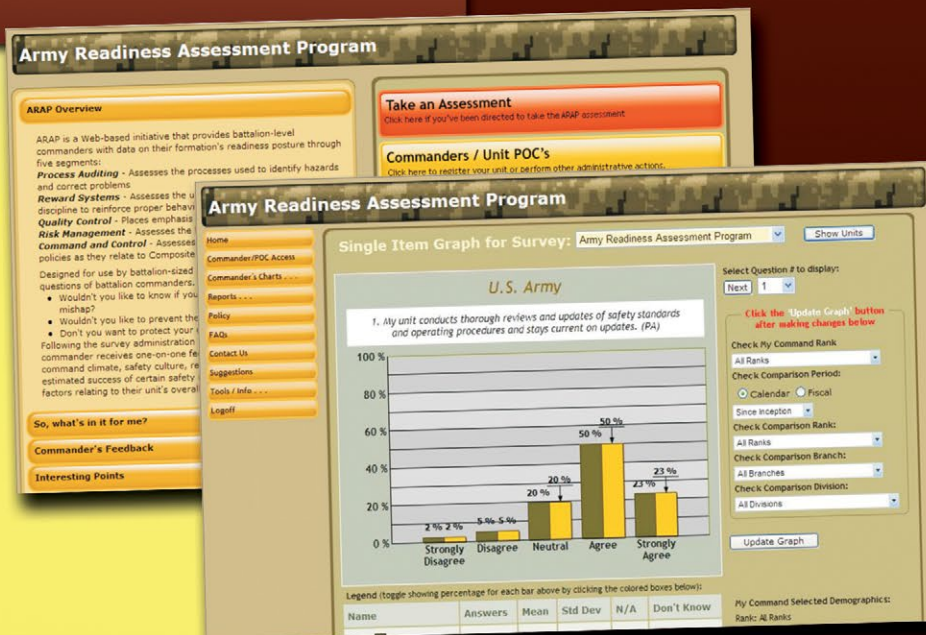
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Warm Weather Woes

SCOTT KUBICA
Ground Directorate
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center
Fort Rucker, Alabama



Now that we're firmly entrenched in the Army's most active training period — the spring and summer months — our focus is on heat illness prevention, and rightly so. However, there are other things lurking in the training and recreation environments that also demand our attention, such as certain plants, insects and snakes, so Soldiers don't fall victim to a preventable injury.

Plants

In most areas of the country, the woods are now covered in green foliage. Soldiers must be aware there are a few of those leafy green specimens they need to avoid; or, if they do come in contact with them, how to alleviate their effects. The three most common offenders are poison ivy, poison

oak and poison sumac.

Poison ivy and poison oak are the three-leafed ground dwellers Soldiers often walk through, lay in or rub up against on a tree. Poison sumac looks like a shrub or small tree and grows in damp areas. The results of an encounter with one of these plants can render a Soldier incapacitated for a few days.

The oily sap from these plants, called urushiol, rubs off on the skin or sometimes onto the clothes. The oil is then typically transferred when rubbing sweat from the face or eyes. Urushiol can cause itching, redness, slight swelling and blisters on the skin, which tend to appear 24 to 48 hours after contact. Although the blisters can break and ooze, the fluid cannot spread the rash.

There are several ways to prevent contact with these plants. First, leaders should

provide an information brief explaining how to identify hazardous plants so Soldiers can try to avoid them. Second, when in areas of known plant growth, Soldiers should refrain from rubbing their faces with their hands. Finally, if a Soldier comes into contact with one of these plants, they should change their clothes and bathe to remove the oils from their skin. Those unfortunate Soldiers who have an acute allergic reaction due to these plants should visit their medics. They will probably give them calamine lotion to dry up the blisters and prevent spreading. In severe cases, a Soldier may have to be taken to the hospital and given treatment via topical steroids such as clobetasol, or systemic steroids and antihistamines or other allergy medicines.

Insects

From the less harmful black flies, chiggers and mosquitoes to the more threatening ticks, insects become more active in the spring and summer months. Protection from these pests can come by way of different DEET-containing lotions and sprays to uniforms impregnated with permethrin. Most of these insects can cause minor itching due to the reaction to the bite, which can be treated with topical Benadryl or other



anti-itching creams. There are some cases where people get numerous bites and then scratch them until they become raw and infected, resulting in the need for medical treatment.

Mosquitoes are known carriers of West Nile Virus. Fortunately, most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. However, about 1 in 5 people will develop a fever with other symptoms. Less than 1 percent of those infected develop a serious, sometimes fatal, neurologic illness. For the most part, though, these insects are little more than just a nuisance.

On the other hand, the tick can cause much more of an issue if you are bitten by an infected vector. Ticks can carry Colorado tick fever, ehrlichiosis, Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, southern tick-associated rash illness and tularemia. While not all ticks are infectious, it's better to be safe than sorry. If you find an embedded tick on your body, see your medical personnel and have them remove it and send it to the lab for diagnosis. If the diagnosis comes back positive, a doctor will then prescribe the proper medical treatment.

With the introduction of the permethrin-treated ACU, the Army has provided a product that will enhance force health protection and readiness. A single factory treatment with permethrin offers significant benefits to the wearer, including increased protection against the bites of mosquitoes,

flies, midges, ticks and chiggers for the life of the uniform. The permethrin-treated ACU protects Soldiers from insect- and tick-borne diseases while in garrison, training and noncombat deployed environments worldwide.

Wearing permethrin-treated uniforms is a key component of the DOD Insect Repellent System.

“Wearing permethrin-treated uniforms is a key component of the DOD Insect Repellent System.”

Soldiers wearing the uniform should continue to properly protect themselves against insect bites and diseases by wearing it with the sleeves rolled down, closing all openings that might let in insects, tucking pants into boots and the undershirt into pants, and keeping the uniform loose. For more than 20 years, the DOD Insect Repellent System has been proven to be highly effective in preventing biting insects from becoming an annoyance or making Soldiers sick.

Snakes

Lastly, there are those creatures that slither on the ground. Snakes become more active as the days heat up. Ensure Soldiers get briefed to avoid snakes and are taught to identify poisonous varieties that may frequent training areas. In the event a Soldier is bitten, it's a

good idea to identify the snake if at all possible. This will greatly assist medical personnel in their treatment plan. Most snake bites won't kill a person, but they can make them sick, so it's best to get treated immediately in order to minimize the severity.

Some poisonous snakes found in North America, such as the

copperhead, rattlesnake and water moccasin, have venom consisting of neurotoxins that affect the nervous system and brain. The coral snake, the most poisonous, has hemotoxin, which affects the heart and cardiovascular system. The bottom line is if you see a snake, leave it alone! Soldiers must be proactive and check sleeping areas and sleeping bags before settling in for the night. “Jake the snake” has been known to slither into sleeping bags during the day to escape the heat.

Conclusion

As the temperatures warm up and you get out to train or enjoy some much-needed recreation, make sure to take those preventive measures to keep everyone safe from those warm weather woes! ■



Zika Virus: What is It? What Can You Do?

KIRK FRADY
U.S. Army Medical Command
Fort Sam Houston, Texas

What is it, where is it and how is it spread? Zika is a mosquito-borne virus closely related to yellow fever, dengue and West Nile viruses. A Zika virus outbreak was identified in Brazil in early 2015. Since then, it has spread to more than 25 other countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a Level 2 Travel Alert (Practice Enhanced Precautions) for areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. This includes the recommendation that women who are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

What can I do to prevent catching it?

The best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is to avoid being bitten. There is currently no vaccine for Zika. Mosquitoes that spread Zika bite mostly during the daytime and prefer to bite people; they live indoors and outdoors near humans. The best prevention is to minimize standing water in items like buckets, bowls, animal dishes, flower pots and vases.

What if I am pregnant or want to become pregnant?

If you are pregnant and plan to travel to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission, consider postponing travel until after delivery. If you are pregnant and

traveled to an area with ongoing Zika virus transmission, your provider can arrange for testing to see if you were infected, even if you never experienced symptoms. If you are not yet pregnant, there is no evidence that Zika infection prior to conception poses a risk for any future pregnancies.

If you think you've been infected, what should you do?

If you think you may be infected, see your primary care provider immediately. If you have recently traveled abroad, tell your healthcare provider when and where you traveled. Your healthcare provider may order blood tests to look for Zika or other similar viruses like dengue or chikungunya.

What are the symptoms?

- About 1 in 5 people infected with Zika virus become ill (i.e., develop Zika).
- The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other common symptoms include muscle pain and headache. The incubation period (the time from exposure to symptoms) for Zika virus disease is not known, but is likely to be a few days to a week.
- The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week.
- Zika virus usually remains in the blood of an infected person for a few days but it can be found longer in some people.
- Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon.
- Deaths are rare.

Treatment

- There is no current vaccine available to prevent Zika infections.
- There is no specific treatment for Zika infections; instead, treat the symptoms.
- Your healthcare provider will recommend supportive treatment such as rest and rehydration.
- If you have Zika, prevent mosquito bites for the first week of your illness.
- During the first week of infection, Zika virus can be found in the blood and passed from an infected person to another mosquito through mosquito bites.
- An infected mosquito can then spread the virus to other people.

What are the Army and DOD doing?

Department of Defense labs are enhancing techniques to test mosquitoes for Zika. Southern Command is offering voluntary relocation out of affected areas to all pregnant DOD employees and beneficiaries, and all Army medical facilities have been notified of the concerns surrounding Zika infections and are prepared to assist patients who may have been infected. The Armed Forces Pest Management Board recommends wear of permethrin-treated uniforms/clothing, use of approved insect repellent and removal of standing water that may serve as mosquito breeding sites to prevent bites. ■

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SLIPS TRIPS FALLS



a loss of traction between the shoe and the walking surface



an inadvertent contact with a fixed object



a slip, trip, or fall from height

for information on avoiding slips, trips and falls, go to <https://safety.army.mil/>

WATCH YOUR STEP

Slips, trips, and falls are a leading cause of Army accidents



<https://safety.army.mil>



Have an Out

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 DALE FOERSCHLER
3-238 General Support Aviation Brigade
Michigan Army National Guard
Grand Ledge, Michigan

In the summer of 1990, I was a new warrant officer just out of flight school who was eager to learn to fly, so I volunteered for a mission with a first lieutenant. Our mission was to support our state's anti-drug division, which later became nationally known as the RAID program. The concept of the operation was to fly a local drug enforcement team in a UH-1H to look for marijuana. Our area of responsibility was the state of Nevada. It was during this six-month period that I learned more about flying than I did the rest of my career.

One of the missions was in the mountains just south and west of Las Vegas in the Red Rock National Forest, where there had been reports of marijuana being grown. We took seven investigators to scout the area. On this day alone, I learned two important lessons about power management.

The first lesson happened in the morning as we were following a water line into the mountains. Everyone's attention was outside, watching a water line that led up a series of valleys into mountainous terrain. As we flew up the mountain passes, we inadvertently flew into a high box canyon. Suddenly, we didn't have power to continue forward. There was no place to land and we didn't



have any altitude to turn around. Basically, we had flown into a trap and were out of options.

The only way out was behind us, so I started a turn to the right while trading off precious airspeed for a little altitude. As I

started to ascend because we had finally gotten above effective translational lift and barely cleared the terrain. The lieutenant, who was also the pilot in command, looked at me and said with a nervous laugh, "I was going to

"There was no place to land and we didn't have any altitude to turn around. Basically, we had flown into a trap and were out of options."

finished the turn, I started a slow acceleration, which in turn started a descent, and I was at max power and had no more options left.

The terrain in front of us was rising and we could not get the helicopter to climb, so I tried to increase the collective, which only caused the low-rotor horn to sound. I was getting ready for the impact when, amazingly, we

take the controls, but I couldn't think of anything better to do and thought it would be better if you crashed instead of me."

The second lesson occurred later that day. Once again, we followed a water line that eventually led to an area where a few marijuana plants were growing. The agents wanted to check them out. We tried landing



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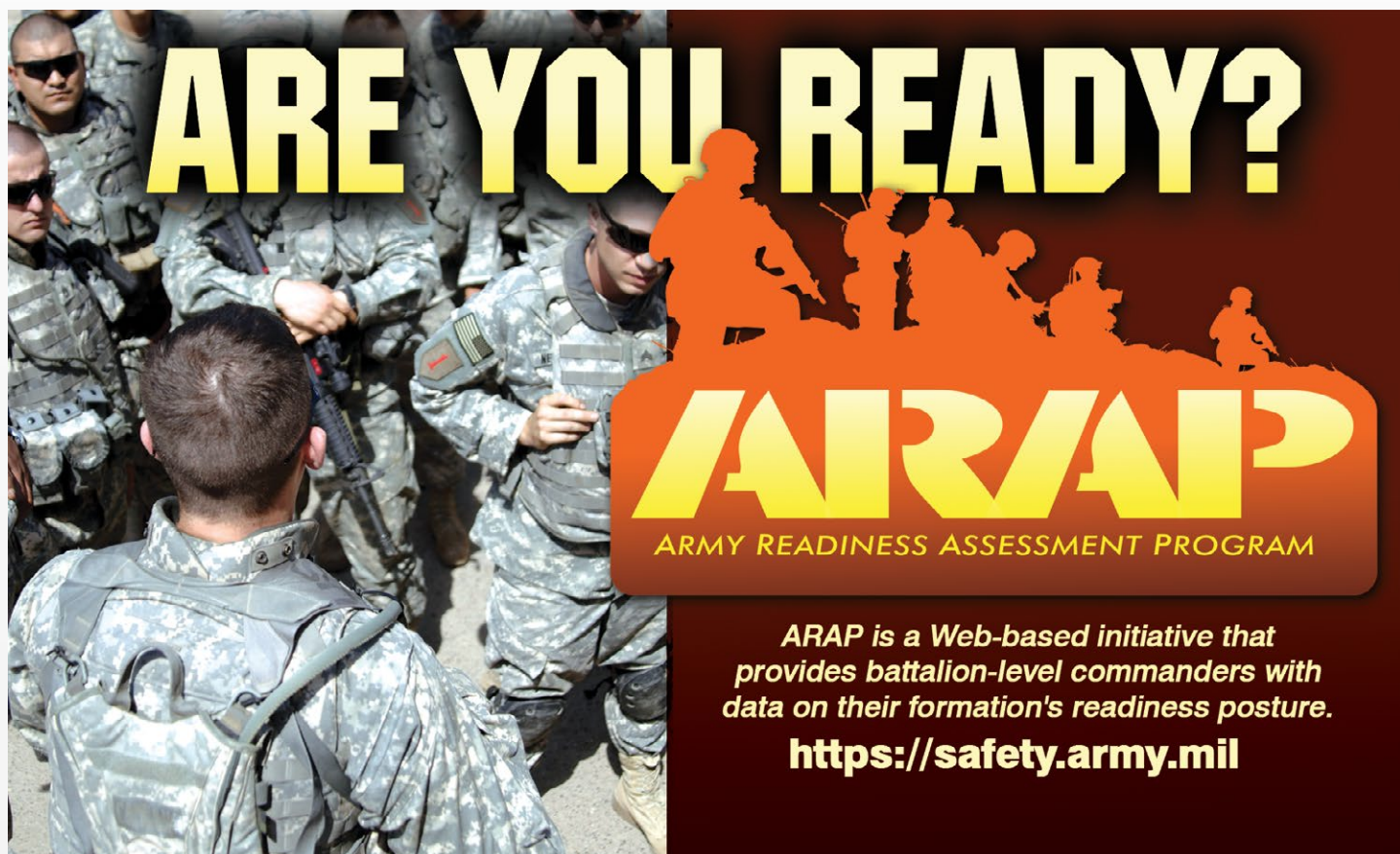
in the immediate area, but there was no good landing area close to the plants. We decided to put a skid on the slope and let them out one by one. While they were looking around, we would orbit until they were ready for pickup. The first part of the plan went flawlessly, and all of the agents left the helicopter without incident. It was not until the pickup that things went awry.

Unlike when we let them off, they all tried to get back into the helicopter at the same time. This

caused a sudden need for power, resulting in momentarily drooping of the rotor. Upon hearing the horn and feeling the helicopter tilt, I decided to take off, which was a good decision except there was one agent half in and half out of the aircraft. As we lifted off, he grabbed the bottom of the seat while the rest of him dangled out of the helicopter. Fortunately for us, he was able to hold on until we found a clear area to land and let him get into a seat.

On that day we got lucky in not

having an aircraft accident — or seriously hurting someone. I had learned the importance of power management. Even though we had calculated our performance planning, just as we had been taught in flight school, I didn't have the experience to truly apply it in flight. Now, whenever I teach flying techniques in mountainous terrain, I always emphasize the importance of having an "out" at your disposal, whether it is airspeed or altitude. ■



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THE RIT COMES

Are you ready
to hit the
road?

- Have your vehicle serviced
- Plan your route
- Pack an emergency road kit
- Check the weather forecast
- Get plenty of rest
- Complete a TRIPS assessment

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It Happens

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 GEORGE BILAFER
B Company, 4-2 Aerial Reconnaissance Battalion
Camp Humphreys, Korea

As a young, thrill-seeking, soon-to-be Army aviator getting ready to start flight school, I did the stereotypical thing and bought a motorcycle. I'd ridden dirt bikes only a handful of times growing up and thought a street bike wouldn't be much different. Eager to get on the road and start riding with friends that already had motorcycles, I signed up for the required Motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic RiderCourse.

Before the course started, I bought a beautiful new Honda CBR600RR and parked it in the garage. I couldn't wait to finish the course so I could start riding it. Looking back, I should have put more thought into what type of motorcycle would best suit a new rider instead of focusing on speed and style. Still, while my skills in the BRC weren't amazing, I was learning quickly. I just kept telling myself, "I'll get used to my bike. It'll be different."

After passing the BRC, I rode my bike every chance I got. I considered myself a very safe rider; I would only ride in fair weather and always wore all of my personal protective equipment, including my helmet, jacket, gloves and riding boots. Since I was waiting to start the primary phase of my flight training, most of my riding was from home, to class and back home. The rest was done on weekends with friends



in groups of about four to eight riders. With every mile I put on my bike, my confidence grew.

A few months after completing the BRC, my friends and I signed up for the SportBike RiderCourse. I learned about the mechanics and fundamentals of sport bike

to have any close calls or near misses while riding and rarely thought of the saying, "There are those who have crashed and those who will." Then one day, on a typical weekend ride, it happened.

We were a group of six riders traveling on a back road about 70

"I would only ride in fair weather and always wore all of my personal protective equipment, including my helmet, jacket, gloves and riding boots."

riding and believed my skill was matching my confidence level. Every weekend I looked forward to the group rides, but I remained in the back because I wasn't as comfortable as some of the other riders at higher speeds. I had yet

mph. As usual, I was in the back of the pack when I went over a patch of gravel on the right side of the lane. I slid off the lane and into the grass. At this point, I was still upright on the bike, but my mind was racing. I didn't remember



"Any time I think something can't happen, this story serves as a painful reminder that it can."

being taught what to do if I ever ended up off road on a sport bike. I thought if I could just grab the clutch and slowly get back on the road that I should be OK.

I squeezed in the clutch lever and slowly started making my way back to the road. Then my front tire hit a small hole on the side of the road and I went over my handlebars, landing on my right shoulder and sliding for what felt like forever. When I finally came to a stop, I just laid face up on the side of the road, trying to figure out what the hell had just happened.

My fellow riders immediately doubled back for me. At this point, adrenaline was rushing through my body and I felt fine. I just kept thinking that if I can get up and walk I wouldn't get kicked out of flight school. My buddies, however, having clearer heads, wouldn't let me get up. Instead, they called an ambulance to take me to the emergency room, where I was treated and released within a few hours.

Fortunately, the only injuries I sustained that day were a separated shoulder, bruised lung, sprained ankle and what looked like a jellyfish under the skin on my hip that stayed for several months. As I said earlier, I always wore all of my PPE. I have no doubt it helped save my life. The state troopers investigating the accident informed me while I was in the ER that things could have been much worse. After I tumbled off the bike, I'd slid between a 10-meter gap between a pine tree and an exposed sewer drain.

Luckily, my recovery was quick and I was able to finish flight school. Looking back, though, getting a sport bike as a cherry rider was not the smartest decision — despite all the precautions I was taking. I'd heard a lot of accident stories, but I always thought, "Eh, it won't happen to me." Well, it did. Any time I think something can't happen, this story serves as a painful reminder that it can. ■

WATCH This!

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State of Shock

COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

Oh, great, another electrical safety article. That's what you're thinking, right? Go ahead and roll your eyes now; get it over with. Now think about why the topic bores you. Is it because you've heard about electrical safety since you were a kid? Is it because you use electrical tools, equipment, toys and appliances every day? Or is it because you trust the builders, manufacturers and installers so much that you feel protected? After all, there are codes and laws in place to keep you safe. Actually, the truth behind these notions has probably gone a long way toward keeping you alive to read this. Sometimes, though, we avoid injury or death just by luck, and the Army's accident records show that luck tends to run out regularly.

Every year, dozens of electrical accidents occur across the Army. The results range from death or serious injury of Soldiers and civilians to the loss of necessary equipment and facilities. You don't want to lose a buddy because you didn't warn them about pulling the third pin off an extension cord plug. And you certainly don't want to lose your gear and personal stuff because you had too many things plugged in, overloading the circuit and causing a fire.

Electrical accidents can happen anywhere. In forward-deployed



locations, they can be especially bad because temporary or refurbished facilities often have nonstandard power systems that make it easier for mistakes to happen. Losing a Soldier in an accident affects everyone in the

the Soldier contacts exposed electrical equipment, or the power system or equipment is improperly grounded or bonded. To help prevent shocks and electrocutions, take the following steps:

“You don’t want to lose a buddy because you didn’t warn them about pulling the third pin off an extension cord plug.”

unit and the mission readiness of the whole organization. Despite the demands and inherent risks associated with combat training, protecting our personnel and preventing accidents must become a primary concern for each individual.

Accidents involving Soldiers getting shocked or killed usually occur when either

- Replace broken electrical equipment or have it repaired by a qualified person. Broken or cracked outlets, tool housings and cuts or tears in wire insulation can allow an electric current to make contact with your skin.

- Keep guards on all electrical equipment and power systems, especially covers. Circuit breakers/fuse boxes must have



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front covers and access panels for computers, amplifiers and other equipment which must be kept in place while powered.

- Don't try to fix power equipment yourself unless you are trained and certified, especially if it is energized.
- Stay away from power lines. It doesn't matter if it's a local distribution line or a main trunk line carrying thousands of volts; a couple of seconds of this power can kill you.
- Never remove the grounding pin from a three-prong electrical plug and don't use two-prong adapters unless approved by an electrician. The grounding wire is there in case the power jumps to the tool or equipment housing. It will take the power away from you. If it is not connected, the power goes through you.
- Know and follow the grounding or bonding rules for all power equipment and check grounding and bonding equipment before each use. Those with nonmetal cases or housings usually don't need grounding and only have a two-prong plug. Power equipment and appliances with metal housings (refrigerators, air conditioners, generators, washing machines, etc.) normally need a grounding conductor (wire/strap). Bonding is electrically connecting the metal housings of two separate appliances and can be used to connect to ground.
- Before the first use of a facility, and periodically afterward, check all grounded outlets to make

sure the ground is working. Inexpensive plug-in testers can be used, in addition to requesting inspections by the facility operator's electricians.

- If you feel any shock while using electrical equipment or when contacting water or metal parts of a building, report it immediately and keep others away until you know it is safe.

Did You Know?

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and the Electrical Safety Foundation International reminds everyone to take the necessary steps to eliminate electrical safety threats from their homes and work areas. For more information, visit the ESFI website at www.esfi.org/.

Most property damage electrical accidents result in fires. There are a few main causes for this type of accident such as too many items plugged in to one outlet, loose/broken connections and improper use of equipment. Steps to prevent the most common causes of electrical fires include:

- Don't plug in multiple devices to a single outlet and never plug one power strip into another (daisy-chaining). Each computer, radio, DVD player, etc., plugged into the outlet may require minimal power, but all of them combined add to the resistance of the circuit and the amount of current running in the wire.

Make a schedule for everyone in the room to take turns charging or using their equipment.

- Use the right size extension cords for your equipment. If the wire feels hot when you're using the equipment, it's probably too thin and should be replaced with a heavy-duty cord. Some equipment, such as an air conditioner, is not recommended for use with any extension cord because it draws too much power.
- Make sure plugs fit tightly into outlets. If an electrical outlet is loose and won't hold a plug firmly, or if the plug isn't pushed all the way in, the loose connection can cause a very small arc that constantly jumps from the outlet to the metal blade of the plug. This can build up heat quickly and cause a fire.
- If electrical equipment has vents, do not block the openings or place the item on loose clothes or bedding. Always turn off equipment when you leave. If you're charging batteries, place on a nonflammable (metal or concrete) surface.
- If any piece of equipment sparks, smokes or feels unusually hot, stop using it and have it checked by qualified personnel.

The way to protect yourself and your team is to rely on smarts, not luck. Learning the hazards of electrical systems can provide the required knowledge to ensure your operations and facilities are safe. ■



Family strong!

Army Safe is Army Strong and that starts with a Soldier's Family. Have the information to help you and your Family stay safe.

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Where to Draw the Line

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 KEKILA KEUMA
B Company, 2-4 GSA
Colorado Springs, Colorado

As time goes on, our comfort and confidence with our aircraft inevitably grows, and what used to take intense concentration becomes easy to do. We all strive to become exceptional pilots, and it is easy for us to fall prey to the vanity of demonstrating our hard-earned skills. However, we are obliged to remember the inherent dangers that are easy to forget, which can have deadly consequences.

I fly the CH-47 Chinook. Rarely is it or its crewmembers ever projected in a glamorous light. Movies are not made about us, we rarely perform medical operations and we don't have awe-inspiring weapons. One thing we do have, however, is a simple canvas seat located inside the companionway, just a few feet behind the pilots, commonly called the jump seat. A Solider sitting in this seat is almost inside the cockpit. It allows the Solider an unfettered view — the same one the pilots have.

If there is passenger on board, such as a ground commander, reenlistee or sister-service member, it's a common practice within our community to allow that person to ride in the jump seat. This creates an almost irresistible trap for us because we are afforded the chance to impress someone.

I was pilot in command of the aircraft, and my co-pilot was a lieutenant with about 300-hours. Our mission was to support a newly established infantry unit's air assault



training. They were in the walk phase of training their junior enlisted Soldiers. Our part comprised of two turns of infil to the objective and then two more turns of exfil back to base.

The route was on the reservation within the standard flight corridor during the day and there weren't any extraordinary weather considerations. It was a well-known route and was fun to fly because of the terrain. I enjoy flying nap of the earth because it's thrilling being low over the trees and between the hills; but when I have a commissioned officer, I'll let them fly the majority of the time if they want.

The lieutenant flew the infil and exfil, both NOE, while I managed the cockpit. The first turn began as expected, in that the turns were gradual and altitudes were constant. As the mission went on, each progressive turn became a little more aggressive and cavalier. For each of those turns, there was someone in the jump seat. Honestly, it was fun. It was a

beautiful day and we were getting to indulge our inner 6-year-olds.

Near the end of the mission, on the second to last turn, we had just descended into a small valley that was lined by large granite cliffs. Heading to the next checkpoint, our path led us directly over one of those cliffs. The lieutenant was on the controls, flying roughly 90 feet above ground level and 100 knots indicated air speed. As we neared the cliff, we maintained the same altitude. I looked over and saw him staring at the cliffs and I asked him what he planned to do. He told me he was going to perform a cyclic climb to get us up and over the cliff. A cyclic climb is a standard maneuver and something I trained him on in previous AMRs, so I knew that he was capable of it.

The cliff got too close for my comfort and I reached to take the controls. I think he saw me going for them, which led him to say, "Clear up," and execute the maneuver. It seemed as if the edge of the cliff



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barely cleared the chin bubble. My body tensed and I raised my feet as if that would have made any difference. Looking at him, it was visible he didn't feel any of the unease I did. I looked at the Solider in the jump seat and saw the excitement in his face, which is what we usually aim for.

Perhaps the co-pilot intended to execute the climb at that exact moment. It had been months since we first trained on it, so there had been ample time for him to practice cyclic climbs. Perhaps he would have waited longer and only my movement catalyzed his own action. I won't ever know because, at the time, I laughed it off and didn't talk to him about it in the after-action review.

It's only now that I am forced to think about it. What did we gain from that flight? Possibly the respect of whomever was in the jump seat. And it is fun to pretend we're Luke Skywalker assaulting the Death Star, without guns and X-wings. We were in a Chinook the size of a bus.

The adage of training as we fight is always a solid argument as well; it's perhaps the strongest argument I can think of. Flying like we would during combat does help pilots become comfortable with the more aggressive maneuvers. Where do we draw the line, though? Where is the line that balances risks

to training value and being a badass? While downrange, accomplishing the mission can mean the capture of a high-value target or take the life of a Solider. Inarguably, the risk-to-benefit ratio is clear and those risks are undertaken. At home, do the risks outweigh the benefits as easily as they do in combat? Yes, we want realistic training, but if we had hit the cliff and shorn off a landing gear, or worse, no one would look back and say that the potential training value was worth the cost of the damage to the aircraft.

I don't know how close we actually came to hitting the cliff. It's my habit to set the radar altimeter to sound off at 25 feet. I don't remember hearing it when we passed the cliff, so perhaps we weren't near it at all and I'm just being overly cautious. Or, perhaps it did go off and in my fright I missed it. I don't know. Nor do I have a definitive lesson to learn since no limitations were broken.

Training must be as safe as it can be because injury or death isn't worth anything in garrison. Yet, we can't be risk averse; this business we're all in doesn't permit it. In the end, I believe it comes down to the individual on the controls and their inclination to ask themselves where they would draw the line. ■

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